

He rejoined, that the peace of the world was his only object, and the happiness of mankind his only wish; this went on for the usual time. He asked us no questions about ourselves or our country, as the other Turks did, but seemed quite overwhelmed with business, moody and anxious. While we were with him, three separate Tartars arrived with despatches. What a life! and what a slight chance for the gentlemen in the ante-chamber!¹

This letter to his father, like the previous letter to Austen, breathes in nearly every line a spirit of intense delight in all the splendour and circumstance of the East, The buzz and bustle of the swarming population, 'arrayed in every possible and fanciful costume'; the brilliant colours of the military chieftains; the scribe with the writing material in his girdle; the call of the muezzin from the minaret; the salute of the passing dervish; the 'wild unearthly drum' that heralds the approach of a caravan and the stately camel that follows at the head of 'an almost interminable procession of his Arabian brethren'; for all such sights and sounds he has eager eyes and ears, and he records them with an exultation that betrays an access of Orientalism. But before the letter closes Europe triumphs over Asia and with perhaps unconscious art he ends with the following palinode: —

I write you this from that Ambrician Gulf where the soft Triumvir gained more glory by defeat than attends the victory of harsher warriors. The site is not unworthy of the beauty of Cleopatra. From the summit of the land this gulf appears like a vast lake walled in on all sides by mountains more or less distant. The dying glory of a Grecian eve bathes with warm light a thousand promontories and gentle bays, and infinite modulations of purple outline. Before me is Olympus, whose austere peak glitters yet in the sun; a bend of the land alone hides from me the islands² of Ulysses and of Sappho. When *I* gaze upon this scene I remember the barbaric splendour and turbulent existence which I have just quitted

1 *Letters*, p. 40-47.

2 Ithaca and Leucadia. Disraeli no doubt had in mind his Byron (*CMLde Harold*, II., 39). It was from

'Leucadia's far projecting rock of woe' that Sappho, according to the very doubtful story, flung herself into the sea. Lesbos, her island home, was of course far away off the coast of Asia Minor.